

**Board of Selectmen Minutes
Beacon Hill Institute
8 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108
October 9, 2014 at 11:30 a.m.**

Norwell Attendees:

BOS: Ellen Allen, David DeCoste, Jason Brown
Energy Committee: Bob McMackin, Matt DeCoursey
Town Administrator Jim Boudreau
Town Planner Chris Dilorio

BHI Attendees:

Dr. David Tuerck, Executive Director
Paul Bachman, Director of Research
Frank Conte, Director of Communications and Information Services

At the suggestion of David DeCoste, Ellen Allen had arranged for this group to meet with the Beacon Hill Institute (BHI) to gain their thoughts about Green Communities (GC) designation. The Energy Committee recommends, and the Selectmen are considering, pursuit at Town Meeting of this designation in order to receive state grants to fund energy efficiency projects in the town.

Dr. Tuerck explained that BHI had conducted significant research into the macro issues of Massachusetts' Green Energy legislation. He expressed their view that the rest of the act is not good for Massachusetts, but said that they had not studied the Green Communities designation for municipalities.

Paul Bachman provided a written summary from the state website of the key requirements for designation, which were reviewed. The Norwell attendees indicated that, of the 5 criteria for designation, the only one of real concern to the Norwell Selectmen is the adoption of the Stretch Code. They further explained that the new base building code, which went into effect on July 1, 2014, is virtually identical to the current stretch code, so the concern is really about the potential impact if/when there is a new stretch code that makes building more expensive than under the base code.

There was a review in some detail of the gap that existed between the stretch code and the prior base building code, as well as the difference in residential building costs and the payback period on those additional energy efficiency items. The prior residential and stretch building codes required a HERS (Home Energy Rating System) rating of 100 and 70, respectively, out of a range of 0 - 500. Bob McMackin shared his recent experience in building a new home with a HERS rating of 13, which he said added between 5% and 10% to the cost of the home and would have a short payback period.

Dr. Tuerck did not think the minimum \$150,000 of state grant money that would come to Norwell was very significant. However, all three BHI representatives noted at various

points that Norwell might as well seek the funds if the risks of GC adoption were insignificant and, in fact, Norwell could later drop out. Ellen Allen noted that the grants received should be viewed in the context of their support for Norwell's annual capital budget (usually \$400,000-500,000).

The key feedback from Dr. Tuerck was that Norwell should focus on two concerns:

First, would adoption of the Stretch Code in any way discourage commercial development in Norwell, thereby working against the Selectmen's goal of increasing the commercial tax base? There was general agreement that this should be explored.

Second, does the legislation truly allow a community to back-out of Green Communities if it should change its mind about the attractiveness of the designation? It was recommended that a lawyer review the language in the statute and that the process of rescinding the GC designation be thoroughly vetted. Jim Boudreau explained that the by-law changes requiring 2/3 town meeting vote for adoption would also require a 2/3 vote to reverse. Dr. Tuerck expressed concern that there could be a campaign by "green" advocates that could successfully stop such a reversal.

The meeting ended at approximately 12:30 p.m., with the Norwell attendees thanking the BHI members for their time and insights.


Board of Selectmen